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Barbara J. Merguerian

THE BEGINNINGS OF SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR ARMENIAN WOMEN: THE ARMENIAN FEMALE SEMINARY IN CONSTANTINOPLE

In February 1844 Mary E. Van Lennep, a native of Hartford, Connecticut, who had recently moved to Smyrna, Turkey, learned that she and her missionary husband Henry had been given the assignment of establishing a boarding school in Constantinople for young Armenian women. Then a young bride of five months, Mrs. Van Lennep confided to her journal her disappointment over the lack of privacy such an assignment would entail, "to be at the head of a seminary, and to have no home but in a boarding school."[1] But as the daughter of a well-known and respected clergyman in Connecticut and the wife of a missionary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), she knew where her duty lay and noted the advantages the new institution would provide in the American effort to spread evangelical Christianity in the Ottoman Empire. Her husband would enjoy "continued opportunities for religious conversation, not only with the pupils and their parents, but with others who will be attracted by the school," she wrote. Mary and Henry Van Lennep, who had sailed to Smyrna from New York City one month following their marriage, immediately commenced the study of the Armenian language.[2]

Education had formed a key component in the program of the American mission in the Ottoman Empire ever since its establishment twenty-five years earlier. The first efforts in this direction, however, had concentrated on teaching literacy to young children and adults in order to enable them to read the Bible. An abortive High School for Armenian young men had been opened by the missionaries in Constantinople in the 1830s, and Cyrus Hamlin's Boys' Seminary had been in operation in the Bebek suburb of Constantinople since 1840. But the Van Lennep's school marked the first effort by the Americans to provide secondary education for women in the Ottoman Empire. Gradually the plans for the school were developed. Mrs. Van Lennep

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was to supervise the housekeeping and character formation of the girls, while a competent teacher was to be obtained from the United States for academic instruction.[3] Establishment of the school was designed to bring about "a more extended enlightening of the females," Mary Van Lennep explained to her mother in a letter dated March 22, 1844. "The Armenian gentlemen feel that a thorough reformation cannot take place in their nation, until those who will be wives and mothers shall come under Christian influence. And they take a deep interest in this enterprise."

Gradually Mrs. Van Lennep became more enthusiastic about the assignment, though the results of her language studies were discouraging at first. "Oh, if it were not for the language, I do believe all my fears would go now," she wrote. In preparation for the new endeavor (and also in an effort to bring about an improvement in Mary Van Lennep's declining health) the young couple moved from Smyrna to Constantinople, then to a nearby country home that offered them the opportunity to concentrate on the study of Armenian. Native speakers were engaged, and use was made of notes on the language prepared by the missionary linguist Elias Riggs (who had been transferred from the Greek to the Armenian mission in 1844, and who was now preparing the first translation of the Old Testament into modern Western Armenian). Native teachers were important in order to learn not only the language "but oriental habits and ways of thinking," Mrs. Van Lennep noted, and she now expressed growing confidence in her ability to learn the language: It was not so difficult after all, except for the long words, she observed.[4]

The year 1844 was a critical one for the American mission in the Ottoman Empire, which had been established in 1819 in a burst of enthusiasm for reviving Christianity in the lands of the Bible. The American missionaries had found themselves unable to realize their original intention of establishing a center in Jerusalem, nor did they experience success in their efforts to convert the Jewish population to evangelical Christianity. Religious work among the Muslim population of the Ottoman Empire was prohibited by strict governmental regulations that mandated death to any Muslim converts to Christianity. Even when these laws were nullified by several reform charters issued in the nineteenth century according to which the Ottoman Sultan guaranteed religious freedom to his subjects, practical realities were far removed from the ideals promised in the official documents; and religious activity on the behalf of Muslims was more often than not counterproductive. The long-range missionary goal of converting the Jewish and Muslim population of the Ottoman Empire to Christianity remained fixed; but for the short run the attention of the Americans

was turned increasingly to the Christian population of the Empire, particularly the Greeks, the Armenians, the Syrians, and the Nestorians. It was hoped that a religious revival among these ancient Christian peoples might supply valuable helpers in the work and provide strong role models for the Muslims one day to emulate.[5]

From the earliest days of the American mission, in Smyrna, Beirut, and Jerusalem, the Americans had become increasingly aware of the Armenians. Armenians were found to comprise the largest group of pilgrims in the Holy Land, they indicated great interest in procuring the Bibles and religious tracts offered by the missionaries, and the first three Middle Easterners to be won over to evangelical Christianity were two Armenian bishops and a vardapet in Beirut, who became subsequently active as language instructors and translators in the missionary work. The Rev. William Goodell, the first American missionary to the area that is present-day Turkey, was assigned to Constantinople in 1831 in order to establish a mission "with particular reference to the Armenians," as were his colleagues, H. G. O. Dwight, who joined him in 1832, John Adger, who arrived in 1834, and Cyrus Hamlin, who came in 1839. Buoyed by the establishment of an independent Greece and by the early success of schools for the Greeks in the Ottoman Empire, the Americans initially placed great hope in the Greek mission; this hope was dashed when the new Greek government assigned the leading role in the field of education to the Orthodox Church, whose leaders refused to sanction Protestant educational institutions or teaching materials. At the same time the mission to the Jews had not registered tangible results. Eager to demonstrate success in order to sustain the interest and support of the American public, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), the first and by far largest American board operating in the Middle East, in 1844 sent a delegation to the area consisting of Foreign Secretary Rufus Anderson and the Rev. Joel Hawes, a member of the ABCFM governing Prudential Committee (and the father of Mary Van Lennep). The recommendations of the delegation, which were subsequently ratified by the ABCFM and put into effect, were that the mission to the Greeks be closed; that the mission to the Jews remain as a small separate effort; and that the mission to Turkey concentrate its attention on the Armenians (the mission in the Ottoman Empire was accordingly renamed the "Mission to the Armenians").[6]

The American missionaries saw themselves as latter-day apostles whose calling was to preach the Bible to the unevangelized around the world. It soon became clear, however, that nineteenth-century challenges differed substantially from those faced by St. Paul and the early apostles; that in order to preach effectively the missionaries

had to learn foreign languages; and that in order to propagate their evangelical religion they had to educate. In the case of the Armenians, the Americans were dismayed to learn that the only written language was the classical Armenian, which could hardly be understood by the average person; they therefore embarked on an ambitious program to translate and publish religious works and textbooks into vernacular Western Armenian. In the early period of the mission there was no agreement on the kind or level of education to be provided, but in a major report accepted by the ABCFM in 1833, the central importance of education in missionary programs was underscored.[7]

In their efforts, the Americans considered the spiritual needs of women on a par with those of the men. Indeed, recognizing the early influence of mothers on their children, the missionaries placed special emphasis on reaching women. In most of the areas in which the missionaries operated, however, custom did not permit the male missionaries to have contact with women; it was left to the missionary wives (who in all cases were given the official designation of "assistant missionary") to carry out the work among women. This practice was initiated with the first American missionaries sent abroad by the ABCFM; in a farewell sermon preached in 1812 to two of the first three missionary brides, the women were told: "It will be your business, my dear children, to reach these women, to whom your husbands can have but little, or no, access. . . . Teach them to realize that they are not an inferior race of creatures; but stand on a par with men. Teach them that they have immortal souls."[8] The missionary wives were also meant to personify in their lives an example which, while not progressive by late twentieth-century standards, stood in great contrast to prevailing practices in most Middle East communities of keeping women well hidden from view. Indeed, as their relatively enlightened attitude toward women became more and more a distinguishing (and attractive) feature of the American Protestants, it became increasingly stressed in the missionary programs (all the more so because it aroused enthusiastic support for the mission work among American women at home). Attention to the spiritual needs of women meant, at first, that they were to become literate, so that they could read the Bible for themselves, and then that they were to learn enough history, geography, mathematics, logic, and science to be able to interpret the Bible according to the teachings of the Evangelicals.

Apparently some kind of education for Armenian women had been available in the Ottoman Empire before the establishment of the American mission. When the missionary explorers Eli Smith and H. G. O. Dwight visited Constantinople in 1830, they toured Armenian schools for boys and were told that schools for girls were

not uncommon, but they were not given permission to visit girls' schools.[9] Perhaps the reference was to the industrial school for girls established in Kum Kapu by Bezjian Amira in 1820, the school for girls established in Samatia by the sister of Janik Amira in 1821, or the Bezjian school of embroidery for girls established in 1826.[10] Undoubtedly some Armenian girls were educated in their homes by private tutors, but their numbers cannot have been large. Wrote Henrietta Hamlin (wife of Cyrus Hamlin) from Constantinople in 1839: "The Armenian ladies have a courtly ease and grace of manners, but are entirely without education. Not one in a thousand can read."[11] Several decades later an Armenian educator gave much the same expression in a statement that "even long after the beginning of the nineteenth century, only one-tenth of the Armenian men in Constantinople were literate; women did not know how to read at all."[12]

Instruction for women was first offered in the home by missionary wives; however, as classes grew larger, such means of instruction were inadequate to meet the needs. The position of the missionary wife was an anomalous one in any case: her primary responsibility lay in creating the proper atmosphere to facilitate the work of her husband and to provide a model of the ideal Christian household. Her direct missionary work was given secondary importance. Since the instruction of young women could not in any case be placed in the hands of the male missionaries (this was true of missions in the Far East as well as those in the Ottoman Empire), the ABCFM was forced to reconsider its policy of barring single women from missionary assignment. Slowly and cautiously, the Board began to appoint American women to head women's seminaries in the mission fields; Cynthia Farrar's assignment to the Marathi mission (India) in 1827, Orpha Graves to Bombay in 1834, Rebecca Williams and Betsy Tilden to Beirut in 1835, and Fidela Fiske to Urmia (Persia) in 1843 were the first tentative steps in this direction.[13]

In the Ottoman Empire, as early as 1830, Mary Reynolds had accompanied the Rev. Josiah Brewer and his wife to Smyrna, where she directed a school for Greek girls prior to her marriage, in 1834, to William Schlauffer, missionary to the Jews in Constantinople. Her case was exceptional, however; the Greek school was operated under the auspices of the Society for Converting Jews, based in New Haven.[14] The American Board did not assign single women to the Ottoman Empire until the mid 1840s. Only then was it possible for the Americans to develop a system of secondary education for women.

By 1844, the missionaries reported three common schools in Constantinople for females, with a total of 100 students. The time had come to provide secondary education to the most promising, as

part of the plan to train indigenous helpers in the work. The ABCFM Annual Report for 1844 gave the justification for the female seminary:

> The great importance of this contemplated institution, in a community where the females have naturally fine traits of character, but are seldom taught even to read, will be at once perceived by the reflecting mind; especially as a means of completing that pious and educated native agency, by means of which the reformation is to be sustained, under God, against the assaults of ignorance and superstition.[15]

Part of the motivation of the Americans in opening a girls' secondary school was to compete with the Roman Catholics, whose schools in the Ottoman Empire were their chief Western rivals. One missionary reported in 1839 that "the Sisters of Charity of France have recently opened a large female boarding school at Pera, under the care of the Jesuits. They also have a female day school in Galata which has sixty scholars, some the children of Protestants."[16]

OPENING THE FEMALE SEMINARY IN CONSTANTINOPLE

The expectation that the cooler climate of Constantinople and its environs would be beneficial to Mrs. Van Lennep's health proved illusory. The young bride contracted typhus, and after an illness of about a week, she died in Constantinople on September 27, 1844, at the age of 23, three weeks after her first wedding anniversary.[17] Mary Van Lennep's death delayed for a time the opening of the boarding school for Armenian young women in Constantinople. But recruitment efforts in the United States soon attracted other volunteers willing to take up the work. Harriet Martha Lovell offered her services to the Board in 1844. She was encouraged to apply for the position at the Female Seminary in Constantinople; and despite the fact that her teaching experience in the United States had been limited to Sunday School, she was informed in January 1845 of her appointment to the proposed seminary. She left Boston aboard the *Stanboul* to Smyrna on February 25, 1845. On the ship she became acquainted with a young missionary couple who had also been assigned to the Armenian mission in the Ottoman Empire and who were to be her close associates: the Rev. Joel Sumner Everett and his bride Seraphina Haynes Everett.[18]

Arriving in Smyrna on April 19, 1845, the new recruits were welcomed by the missionary families there and housed with the John Adgers (he headed the Armenian section of the missionary press in Smyrna and was actively engaged in translation work). According to Martha Lovell's letters home, she and the Everetts wasted no time in beginning their Armenian language instruction; after four days she reported that she had mastered the thirty-eight letters of the

alphabet, some of them "very difficult to sound," and was reading words of two syllables.[19] Late in April the new missionaries went to Constantinople to attend the annual meeting of the Armenian mission, where they met the dozen or so American missionaries and their families then living in the Ottoman Empire. At that time, the women did not attend the mission meetings. However, there were opportunities to observe the status of the work. Mrs. Everett reported home that Dr. Dwight had enlarged the section of his home where services in Armenian were held and that there was everywhere a great demand among the Armenians for copies of the Scriptures and related publications (sermons, hymns, and the like).[20]

Following the meeting, the Everetts returned to Smyrna where, with the Riggs and Adger families, they continued their Armenian studies at nearby Bournabat. Seraphina Everett wrote home that every morning from 8 A.M. to 1 P.M. was spent in learning Armenian, during which time she read and translated a chapter of the Bible every day and worked on the grammar with Mr. Riggs. She complained of the lack of a grammar book and the fact that the dictionary was in classical Armenian. She looked forward to beginning to read *Pilgrim's Progress* (which had been translated into Armenian by Mr. Adger for use in the schools) or *Robinson Crusoe.* Meanwhile Miss Lovell was living with the Goodell family in Constantinople, where two young Armenian girls, Armaveni and Ermonia, were teaching her Armenian while she was teaching them geography, arithmetic, and English. "Very few of the Armenian girls are taught even to read," Miss Lovell reported home, "although they have good minds and are glad to be instructed." She reported that she was reading *Robinson Crusoe* in Armenian. Miss Lovell also observed the growing popularity of Western social customs among the Armenians in Constantinople: at a wedding of a couple close to the evangelicals, the bride, to please her mother, dressed in "traditional Armenian dress," which was described as red silk trousers, a green silk jacket with long sleeves and a train, a fez, and a large quantity of gold coins (her dowry) woven into her hair; following the ceremony she quickly changed to a white silk dress "à la Frank." According to strict Armenian custom, Miss Lovell reported, the bride sits alone for three days, with no human contact except with those who bring her food, and on the third day she is seen by her husband for the first time, her veil having hidden her face during the wedding ceremony. Miss Lovell described the bride as very pretty and agreeable. "People here are very frank and affable," she continued; "I wish I could throw aside my American reserve."[21]

Arrangements were now made to open the seminary in a house adjoining the chapel house then occupied by Mr. Dwight and located

in the Constantinople suburb of Pera. The school was allocated four rooms and a hall on the third floor. One room served as the classroom, one was Miss Lovell's room, the two other rooms were dormitories, and the hall served as dining room. The Goodells occupied the lower floors; Mrs. Goodell was to take care of the housekeeping and to be "the mother of all the students." Miss Lovell was now having half-hour conversations in Armenian each day.[22] The plan was to admit six girls, in addition to Armaveni and Ermonia. The modest beginnings of the school on October 27, 1845, were described by Miss Lovell in a letter home:

> I am now writing in the school-room of the "Armenian Female Seminary." A sounding title, you would say, probably, were you to see our little school; but we will not "despise the day of small things"; on the contrary you will, I am sure, thank God that he has permitted me to make this small beginning. I sit now at my table surrounded by eight Armenian girls, including two who have been with us before, all just now engaged in writing. I commenced two weeks ago, with six scholars. Two have come since, and we have had applications to receive several others; but we were unable to do so for want of room, and because it is thought that this number is as many as I can do justice to. The six who have now joined the school are between the ages of eleven and thirteen. Their names are Soorpohee, Aroosiak, Tachoohee, Senim, and two Mariams. The girls all board with us, and Mrs. Goodell has the general superintendence of their clothing, etc. Armaveni assists in teaching. Only one of the new ones learns English. They learn reading, writing, and arithmetic. Wednesday afternoons I teach them sewing. We have prayers with them in the morning, by Mr. Goodell, in Turkish—in the evening, by Mr. Dwight, in Armenian. Each one commits a portion of Scripture to memory every morning, and we use the Bible as a reading-book. Sabbath morning they join our Sabbath school, instructed by Armaveni; and in the afternoon I teach them the catechism, which has been translated into Armenian. We also attend Mr. Dwight's Armenian service; but sit in an adjoining room, with the door a little open, as custom will not admit of our sitting with the men at present.[23]

The modest beginning of the school was dictated by several factors: the lack of accommodations for a larger number of students; the inexperience of Miss Lovell (especially in the use of the Armenian language); and also fear that a large school would attract the ire, and the opposition, of the Armenian patriarch, who had already on more than one occasion attempted to break up the seminary for boys at Bebek.[24] It was the original intention of the Americans that no student under nine years of age be accepted into the school, that the minimum time of study per student be four years, and that at least half of the students be able to pay their expenses.[25] However, the rapid changes in the Armenian evangelical community in the following months made it impossible to follow the original intentions of the school's sponsors.

The initial effort of the Americans among the Armenians was designed to foster reform in the Armenian Church, to remove what

the missionaries saw as corrupt and incorrect practices that had crept into use during centuries of foreign rule. In this effort the Americans were at first encouraged by the enlightened segment of the Armenian Church. By the late 1830s and early 1840s, however, partly because of the increased militancy of the Protestant programs and partly because of tensions within the Armenian community, the relationship deteriorated. The anathema issued by the Armenian patriarch in early 1846 against the priest Vrt'anēs for his alleged evangelical tenets marked the beginning of a chain of events that led to the organization of an Armenian evangelical church in Constantinople in July 1846 and the establishment by the Ottoman government of a separate Protestant millet, with its guarantee of religious freedom to the evangelicals, in 1850. Because the Armenian patriarch enjoyed extensive civil as well as religious powers over his flock, his excommunication of the evangelicals not only signaled a loss of church membership but was accompanied by economic sanctions as well and resulted in the loss of livelihood by many of the evangelical families.[26]

For the Girls' Boarding School, the excommunication meant that Apostolic families were prohibited from enrolling their daughters, and the Seminary became exclusively Protestant. It also meant that the Protestant families, now deprived of means of livelihood, were no longer able to pay the costs of educating their daughters. "Instead of educating the daughters of a privileged class, who would be able to bear the expense, we were called upon in the good providence of God, to educate indiscriminately the daughters of a whole community —this new and important branch of the great Protestant family," Goodell wrote. Several of the pupils in the Seminary were excommunicated by name, and nearly all belonged to excommunicated families. Only two students left the school, however; with several new students, total enrollment by May 1846 reached thirteen.[27] During the next five years, the seminary grew slowly; by the fall of 1847 there were twenty-three pupils reported, two students having been married (one to a Protestant in Brusa and the other to the preacher in Trebizond).[28]

CURRICULUM

According to the Rev. Goodell, who had general supervision over the seminary in this period, the curriculum consisted of grammar and logic in classical Armenian; and geography, history, moral philosophy, arithmetic, astronomy, and so on, in modern Armenian. The reading books in Armenian consisted of the Bible, *Pilgrim's Progress,* and Merle D'Aubigne's *History of the Reformation* (a work that had been

translated into modern Armenian by the missionaries in a not-so-subtle attempt to demonstrate the kind of change they had in mind for the Armenian Church). Also, in this period, two basic texts used in Armenian schools, Wayland's *Moral Science* and Upham's *Intellectual Philosophy,* were translated and published in modern Armenian. Goodell claimed that the school boasted many "first-rate scholars" in geography.[29] The older, more educated students assisted in the teaching, and a male Armenian assistant was engaged to teach classical Armenian, penmanship, and vocal music. Although some of the first students, including Armaveni, had been taught English, and although English was taught at the boys' seminary in Bebek, it was not part of the curriculum at the girls' seminary. However, the students were so anxious to learn English that they were allowed to work at it in the evenings, when all their other studies were completed.[30]

From the beginning, following the system popularized by Mary Lyon at Mount Holyoke Seminary in Massachusetts, the students were required to do their own work, that is, to "make their own beds, sweep their own rooms, fill their lamps, lay their table, wash their dishes, carry up their own wood and water . . . to the fourth story, light their own fires, iron their own clothes, etc., etc.," the Rev. Goodell later recalled.[31] The students also, for the most part, cut and made their own clothes. Except for an hour devoted to music, Saturday was spent in general housecleaning. The tight quarters for the school made exercise and sports practically impossible; "The only recreation any of them ever took, while the school was with us in Pera," Rev. Goodell wrote, "was skipping the rope on the terrace. The place was altogether 'too strait' for them." The students enjoyed singing, and music had a prominent place in the school. An American benefactor had furnished a piano, and talented students were given piano lessons. "Every one of them has committed to memory their whole Hymn Book, consisting of more than fifty choice hymns," the Rev. Goodell stated (most of the hymns had been translated from the English).[32]

Initially one afternoon a week, and later two afternoons, were devoted to needlework, both plain and ornamental. The proficiency of the students in this activity provided an opportunity to train them in charitable work. One of these afternoons (Fridays) the students met as a benevolent society to prepare fancy sewing offered for sale, the proceeds being dedicated to a charitable purpose. One year, for example, the proceeds were donated to the mission station in Aintab for providing reading lessons to the female members of the church and community. (The children of the Armenian school in Aintab were employed for this purpose, receiving for their services one para per lesson each—a dollar at that time being worth 960 paras). From the

proceeds of their fancy work the students also contributed small amounts for the support of the Armenian pastor, for the support of a colporteur in the interior, for the poor, and for "various benevolent objects."[33] At the close of the sewing session they were joined by a few women in the neighborhood for a female prayer meeting. Religion, of course, was a prominent feature in all aspects of the school, from daily morning and evening prayers to a series of services every Sunday. "The first, and the leading object, which the managers have endeavored steadily to pursue from day to day, has been not to make their pupils great scholars, but 'to make them wise unto salvation'," Goodell wrote. Miss Lovell made it clear, in her letters, that the primary object of the school should be "the conversion of everyone who enters it." She added: "And the next has been, while aiming to give them a solid education, to teach them also habits of economy, industry, and benevolence, and thus to prepare them for usefulness in the station they will be likely to occupy."[34]

Although the training of teachers was a primary goal of the school, comparatively few of the first graduates were employed as teachers, first because most of them married at an early age (so much so that they were often unable to complete the course of study at the school) and also because the occupation of single women as teachers was not accepted by the community at the time. In 1864 in Marash, for example, Mrs. Josephine L. Coffing, a traveling missionary, organized a girls' school and placed in charge one of the products of the missionary schools for women. So great was the local opposition to the young teacher that, when Mrs. Coffing returned the next year, she found that nearly all the pupils had left and the teacher was greatly discouraged. "The men called her a brazen-faced thing for trying to teach,—a thing no woman could do. The women called her crazy, because she did not improve her opportunities for matrimony. Some called her proud; some accused her of wishing to turn a 'Frank'; and all turned from her with scorn and cutting indifference."[35] Mrs. Coffing persisted in her efforts on behalf of the women in Marash, and by 1878 there were ten schools in the city taught by girls: "So rapid had been the change of public sentiment that the people thought they [the women] excelled men in teaching."[36] It was, however, a long and gradual process to accustom the people in the provinces to accept single Armenian women as teachers.

By 1850 the Seminary had become well established in Pera. But the lack of space was a persistent problem, and when the Goodells decided in 1850 to come to the United States for a lengthy visit, the school was moved back to Bebek, to a site adjoining the Boys' Seminary, in a rented house. Mr. Everett, who had been transferred from

Smyrna to Constantinople to help out at the school, was now placed in charge of it, while his wife Seraphina was given the general housekeeping supervision formerly exercised by Mrs. Goodell. Mrs. Everett by this time was proficient in both Armenian and Greek so that, in addition to assisting Miss Lovell in the teaching, she took responsibility for the one or two Greek girls sometimes enrolled in the school. The physical arrangements for the Seminary in Bebek were excellent; but the facility was remote from Constantinople and the Armenian community, and both teachers and students felt isolated. Finally, in February 1853, part of a house owned by an Armenian in Hasköy, on the Golden Horn, was rented and the school was moved once again.[37]

Staffing the Seminary continued to be a persistent problem. Miss Lovell, the first principal, was married in May 1852 to the widowed Cyrus Hamlin and immediately left the school (without even completing the spring term). Responsibility for operating the school was now entirely in the hands of the overworked Seraphina Everett, who, desperate for help, invited her sister Kate in America to join her. The American Board had meanwhile engaged Maria West to take over the school. Kate Haynes and Maria West arrived in January 1853, in time to help with the move to Hasköy in February and to relieve Mrs. Everett (who gave birth to a baby girl that same month). Miss West made rapid progress in Armenian, and in the fall of 1854 she was placed in charge of the school, which by now enrolled thirty boarding students and six day-students, totals that increased to thirty-five boarders and twelve day-students by April 1854. Mrs. Everett continued to have the general responsibility for feeding and clothing the girls; she also assisted in the Armenian-language instruction. Worn out by these responsibilities, added to the care of her family, she contracted typhus and died in December 1854.[38]

Maria West quickly and ably stepped into the position as principal of the school. While she does not minimize either the major problems of typhus and plague faced by the missionaries, nor the minor but vexing trials of dealing with the "F-sharps" (fleas) and "B-flats" (bedbugs), she provides a generally optimistic and upbeat picture of missionary work in her memoirs.[39] Miss West graphically describes the exhausting effort required to transform the old house in Hasköy into appropriate quarters for the school. She also outlines a typical day for students at the Seminary, beginning with the dawn of each day:

> The rising bell rings at 5½ o'clock. At 6 o'clock, all assemble in the school-room, and unite in singing a verse of some morning-hymn, followed by a brief prayer for a benediction upon the new day. They then disperse to their closets, for twenty minutes of private devotion. The breakfast-bell rings at 6½ o'clock; and the group of neatly-dressed Armenian girls gathered around that simply-spread table is a

pleasant sight. After the "blessing," each one repeats a verse of Scripture as her text for the day.[40]

Miss West then talks about the meals and the housework.

Their food is very much that to which they are accustomed at home, though it is served in European style. Breakfast over, they scatter to their domestic work; and Hovsep, our "Man Friday," comes to know what he shall procure from the market for the day. The kitchen, store-room, etc., are duly inspected; and when the "preparation bell" rings, the morning work is completed, and the house in order.[41]

Instruction in the school centered on reading and writing, in which the Bible was an important textbook, again following the system developed by Mary Lyon at Mount Holyoke Seminary:

School commences at 8½ o'clock. The pupils are in their seats, each with an open Bible upon the desk before her. They rise when I enter, and respond to my salutation with a salaam. The first hour, after the opening exercise, is spent in the study of God's Word, and it is the most delightful of the day. . . .

No other text-book can wake up mind and strengthen intellect like the Bible! Next to the "Book of books," "Wayland's Moral Science" is the favorite study of our advanced pupils. "Upham's Mental Philosophy" is too abstract and abstruse, and after the first few chapters it is dropped. Geography is very distasteful to these Armenian girls, unless combined with history and map-drawing. In grammar, ancient and modern, and arithmetic, they make good proficiency, and manifest a decided taste for music, learning to read the notes at sight, and carrying the different parts with comparative ease and rhythmical accuracy. A little astronomy and natural philosophy, and, now and then, a lecture on physiology, complete the round of studies in the Armenian language.[42]

The school day was interrupted for a one-hour lunch of bread and fruit, and continued until 4:30 P.M., when classes ended and students engaged in a half-hour of "private devotion." Five or six students might meet with the principal for any question relating to school work, discipline, or their religious life. Dinner was at 6 P.M., followed by a brief social time until "study hour" at 7 P.M., when all returned to the schoolroom for quiet study. The day ended with a roll call, review of the day's events, and distribution of the mail; this was followed by a brief period of recreation with the principal, sometimes consisting of a story (often about life in America), or an exercise in simple gymnastics, or a game of "blindman's buff" in the great hall. At 9:30 in the evening, the principal reported, ". . . the 'retiring bell' rings; and twenty minutes later, I go the rounds, to see if all lights are extinguished, bid my flock 'goodnight,' and receive their pleasant responses, 'Asdoodzo pare'—the good of God,—or, 'Anoosh koon vaiala' —sweet sleep enjoy—and then return to my room."[43]

In developing a curriculum for the higher education of Armenian

women, the American missionaries based their program on educational institutions then flourishing in the United States. Specifically, their schools were based on the academies and seminaries which were spreading throughout the United States, especially in New England, and which emphasized the teaching of practical skills; the institutions were usually under the direction of clergymen and included strong religious training. Established as democratic schools, in contrast with the more traditional elite schools that stressed Greek and Latin studies, the academies placed major importance on the teaching of reading and writing in the English vernacular. The girls' schools, as noted, were influenced by the educational philosophy of Mary Lyon, founder of Mount Holyoke Seminary in 1837, who scorned the fashionable refinements offered at many girls' schools, such as dancing, drawing, and ornamental needlework, in favor of the more practical skills of plain sewing and housekeeping.[44]

The refusal of the missionaries to adopt any specifically Armenian features into the curriculum—for example, their disregard of Armenian music in favor of American hymns whose words had been translated into Armenian—might have been a serious deficiency in their educational programs. This deficiency was offset by the emphasis on the basic skills of reading and writing in the vernacular language which translated, in the case of the Armenian mission, into the use of the modern Western Armenian as the language of instruction. This linguistic policy well suited (and may have helped to bring about) the growing national self-consciousness experienced by the Armenians in the nineteenth century. The central role of religion in the curriculum, with its stress on lessons taken from the Bible, while based upon evangelical Protestantism rather than the traditional Armenian orthodoxy, was not alien to the Armenian educational tradition, which had always been heavily influenced by the Christian religion. And the stress on practical subjects—hygiene, housekeeping, and sewing—provided suitable instruction. The fact that the education offered in the women's seminaries produced graduates with useful skills helps to explain the success of the schools in overcoming the initial resistance to the education of women.

NEW EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

The development of the Armenian Female Seminary in Constantinople in the decades of the 1850s and early 1860s was affected by events taking place within the Armenian community in the Ottoman Empire and by trends in the missionary movement worldwide. In the Ottoman Empire, following the establishment of a separate Protestant

millet in 1850, the missionary board devoted additional resources to this promising field. In 1851, the senior secretary of the ABCFM, Rufus Anderson, presented a report entitled "The Urgent Claims of the Armenian Reformation" in which he called for a dramatic increase in personnel and in funds earmarked for the programs designed for the Armenians. The mission in Aintab, established in 1848, enjoyed great success, as did newly established stations in Marash, Kessab, Diarbekir, Kharpert, Caesarea, Mardin, and Marsovan. The growth in the Armenian mission came, for the most part, in the provinces and not in the capital city.[45]

At first the Protestants in the newer stations sent their promising young men and women to the seminaries in Constantinople for secondary education, but these young people from the provinces sometimes experienced difficulties in adjusting to life in the capital city, and increasingly local populations wanted their own local secondary schools. During these years the growing debate in the United States about slavery and the unsettled conditions leading to the Civil War distracted the attention of many missionary supporters, and the American Board experienced great difficulty both in raising funds and in recruiting workers. These circumstances acted somewhat as a brake on the expansion of the Armenian mission. Despite these restraints, however, in the decade from 1858 to 1868, the Armenian mission grew rapidly in both funds and personnel. In 1858 the Armenian mission accounted for 20 percent of the total number of missionaries under the American Board (74 out of 373) and 25 percent of the expenditure ($89,000 out of $356,000). By 1868 the Armenian mission accounted for 33 percent of both missionaries and funds (110 out of a total of 332 missionaries and $177,000 out of a total budget of $531,000).[46]

At the same time, in the 1850s, the American Board was reviewing its policy in the field of education. The board had in 1833 approved a policy of strongly developing educational facilities as a key element in missionary programs. But what kind of education, what level of instruction, and for whose benefit were issues that remained to be decided. In all mission fields, the American schools were popular with the indigenous populations, but not always for the reasons intended by the board. American schools became a vehicle for the acquisition of a Western education by students who often had no interest in the Protestant religion. The problem was most serious in India, where the English-language education provided in the American schools produced graduates in great demand in the civil service and commercial enterprises created by the ruling British. In 1856, the board's senior secretary Rufus Anderson headed a three-member delegation

which toured schools in India and the Middle East. Based on the conditions observed in India, the delegation called for fundamental changes in the operation of the mission. While the delegation did not find problems in the mission in the Ottoman Empire, its conclusions affected that mission in equal measure.

Subsequently, under Secretary Anderson's guidance, a new approach to mission education was developed, one which was designed to correct the perceived inadequacies of the situation in India but which was applied unilaterally across the board in all mission fields. The new policy stipulated that educational facilities were to be limited to the children of Protestant families and not made available to the general population at large, thus in theory at least making it impossible for missionaries to continue to attract potential converts and their families through the schools. Indigenous populations did not need a high level of education, according to the policy; on the contrary, advanced education had a tendency to remove students from their native villages and mitigated against the purpose of higher education, which was to train native preachers, teachers, and helpers in the evangelical work. A modest education could be provided locally, the new policy held, making it unnecessary to send students to large cities, where they might become corrupted by the relatively high standard of living and refuse to return to the simple life of the villages. Education at all levels was to be in the vernacular; one of the most controversial aspects of the new policy was its ban on the teaching of English.[47]

The application of the new policy meant that both the Boys' Seminary in Bebek and the Girls' Seminary in Hasköy were closed in 1862, and plans were announced to reopen them in Marsovan. (This decision may also have been dictated in part by problems the missionaries encountered with the local Armenian church in Constantinople in 1860 is not clear from the sources.) Cyrus Hamlin, founder and principal of the Bebek Seminary, was a leading opponent of the policy and resigned from the Board; he was immediately engaged by philanthropist Christopher R. Robert of New York to establish a college in Constantinople, an institution that was to become Robert College.[48]

The language policy did not affect the Girls' Seminary, since it had been from the beginning conducted in the Armenian vernacular (and evening courses in English had given way by this time to the Turkish). In accordance with the new policy, however, plans were announced to move the school to Marsovan. The public examination at the close of the final year was well attended by parents, missionary and other friends, and the local Armenian community. According to Maria West:

> There were the usual exercises, showing the proficiency made by the class in the course of study—comprising arithmetic, geography, grammar, ancient and modern, also ancient and modern history, astronomy, and natural philosophy—the latter limited for want of suitable Armenian text-books—moral science, and Bible history; with the reading of essays, varied by singing, and the exhibition of specimens of penmanship, mapdrawing, and needle-work.[49]

Most interest was focused on the combined graduation exercises and reunion, held the last day of June, to which written invitations had been sent to all the former pupils residing in and around Constantinople. Thirty-four former pupils were present, with twelve of their children; the graduating class also numbered twelve. Dr. Goodell and Dr. Hamlin recalled the history of the school; Dr. Riggs presented the diplomas, and the Armenian Pastor Muggerdich, husband of the first pupil, gave the concluding address.

> Casting his eyes over the assembly of well-dressed and respectable intelligent-looking Armenian mothers and daughters, he said that was the first time he had witnessed such a sight in Stamboul: The first company of educated Eastern women ever gathered in the city of the Sultan for such a purpose! He blessed God that he was permitted to see that day, and hoped it would not be the last he should witness. He then took a retrospective glance at the past, when there was but one school for girls in all Turkey, comparing it with the present, when many girls are learning, at least to read, and schools for them are being established throughout the land. Addressing himself to those who were mothers, he charged them to remember their responsibilities in training up a generation of Christian men and women. He spoke of the main object for which the school was established, and very impressively urged the duty of imparting what each had received to her sisters who were sitting in darkness.[50]

In compiling statistics for the seventeen years the Female Seminary had been in operation, it was calculated that the number of students totaled 128, of which half became members of the Protestant church while in school. Of the total number, 83 were from Constantinople and its suburbs and 45 from interior stations (5 from Smyrna, 2 from Brusa, 2 Rodosto, 13 Nicomedia, 3 Bardizag, 2 Adabazar, 1 Bilijuk, 6 Trebizond, 3 Marsovan, 2 Tokat, 1 Erzerum, 3 Diarbekir, and 1 Athens). Thirty-seven completed the four-year course. By 1875, eighteen had married pastors and twelve were unmarried teachers. One of the graduates was reported teaching a prosperous school of forty-five girls in Diarbekir, using the Bible as the principal textbook and encouraging pupils to teach their mothers to read; she also conducted weekly meetings for women and monthly meetings for mothers. Another graduate was reported in Marsovan as a missionary teacher, conducting a school for sixteen to eighteen young women, weekly meetings for up to seventy women, and giving singing instruction to younger children in day schools. Two graduates were in Bardizag, one as teacher in a

school of forty pupils and the other instructing women house to house and holding monthly mothers' meetings. Others could be found teaching in Adabazar, in the suburbs of Constantinople (Ballat and Pera), in Nicomedia, and Brusa. The wife of the pastor in Kharpert, another graduate, had just completed the translation into Armenian of Todd's Question Book on Genesis.[51]

Thus came to an end the Armenian Girls' Seminary in Constantinople in 1862. But the concept of higher education for women was becoming increasingly accepted and supported in the Armenian community, as the number of high schools and boarding schools for women in the provinces grew. In Aintab, for example, when the American mission was established by Dr. Azariah Smith in 1848, only one woman in the town could read at the time, according to the missionary sources (she was Varteni, granddaughter of a priest, who later became an enthusiastic and valued worker in the Protestant community). The concept of education for girls and women was at first resisted in Aintab, as elsewhere; the following passages from a letter from the missionary is typical of attitudes encountered by the mission in the Armenian field:

> When it was proposed to open a school for girls, the suggestion was met by opposition of all kinds. Old custom said, "No; when was it ever heard that a woman needed to read and write? Oh, absurd innovation! Oh, Satanic device!" In the villages the same spirit of conservatism demurely asked, "Who, then, will bring our wood and water? Who will cultivate our fields? Who will bear the burdens?"[52]

By 1861, however, at the instigation of the Americans, 36 schools had been established in the Aintab area, with a total of 1,476 pupils, 540 of which (or over one-third) were female. That year, Myra A. Proctor arrived in Aintab from the United States to establish a high school for girls which became, in 1863, a boarding school. In 1866 a new building was constructed, and by 1869 Miss Proctor (now assisted by Mary G. Hollister) headed a Girls' Seminary, a Preparatory Department, a primary school (which provided an opportunity for the older students to acquire practice in teaching), and a Teachers' Institute, which met weekly.[53]

The story was much the same in Kharpert, where Mrs. Susan A. Wheeler began instructing young women in 1858. A boarding school for women was established by Mrs. Wheeler in 1860, and in 1862 Arabella Babcock was sent out from New York to take charge of the school. By 1865 there were 42 pupils in the boarding school, which continued to prosper. At Marash, the Girls' High School established by Mrs. Josephine L. Coffing grew to 38 by 1868, and in Bitlis Mrs. Alzina M. Knapp opened a school for girls in 1866 which became,

upon the arrival of the sisters Charlotte and Mary Ely in 1868, the much admired "Mount Holyoke of Bitlis" Seminary for girls.[54]

The transfer of the girls' boarding school from Constantinople to Marsovan encountered unexpected difficulties, owing partly to a lack of personnel and partly to misunderstandings with the local Armenian community.[55] The Annual Report for Marsovan in 1863 refers to a High School for Girls with twenty-six pupils, many of them from "Armenian families of wealth and high position" but, "breaking through all prejudice against female education and the name Protestant, they come and sit at the feet of a young teacher, in an unfurnished and unattractive schoolroom, to be taught to read God's word, and they on their way home drop in to give a lesson to those less enlightened." It was only in 1866 that the Boarding School in Marsovan was firmly established under Ann Eliza Fritcher.[56]

The great expansion of Protestant sponsored education for Armenian women came with the formation, in Boston in 1868, of the Women's Board of Missions, an auxiliary of ABCFM. Distressed by the slow growth of women's education in the missionary fields, the women took matters into their own hands. Significantly, one of the first projects of the new Board was the funding of a higher educational institution for women in Constantinople, where the absence of such a facility had become an embarrassment. The three-fold plan for the Constantinople Home, as it was called, was ambitious and innovative: community outreach and medical care for women were included, along with formal education. The language of instruction the first few years was Armenian, in deference to the preponderance of Armenians among the students. As the school expanded and attracted Greek and Bulgarian students as well as Armenians, the language of instruction changed to English. This school developed into Constantinople College for Women.[57] Similarly, many of the other girls' boarding schools in the larger missions gradually raised their level of instruction and became colleges: in Marsovan the Girls' Boarding School became part of Anatolia College; in Kharpert it became the Female Department of Euphrates College; in Marash the Central Turkey Girls' College.[58]

The modest seminary planned by Mary Van Lennep in 1844, opened by Martha Lovell in 1845, and developed by Maria West from 1854 to 1862 established a model for similar schools throughout the Ottoman Empire. Armenians were the first to benefit from the American programs designed to provide higher education for women. These programs struck a responsive chord within the Armenian community, which was undergoing rapid social, political, and economic change during this period. Higher educational institutions in the Ottoman Empire for Armenian women expanded during the decades stretching

from 1870 to World War I, largely as the result of the American missionary effort, but also reflecting other influences at play in the Armenian community. A study of these educational institutions could provide valuable insights into the modern evolution of Armenian communities in Armenia and the diaspora.

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NOTES

1. Louisa Fisher Hawes, *Memoirs of Mrs. Mary E. Van Lennep* (New York, NY: Anson D. F. Randolph, 1860), p. 263.

2. Ibid., pp. 264, 268.

3. Ibid., p. 270.

4. Ibid., pp. 317, 267.

5. Official histories of the ABCFM mission to the Armenians are: Rufus Anderson, *History of the Missions of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to the Oriental Churches*, 2 vols. (Boston, MA: Congregational Publishing Society, 1872); William E. Strong, *The Story of the American Board: An Account of the First Hundred Years of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (Boston, MA: The Pilgrim Press, 1910); *Historical Sketch of the Missions of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, in European Turkey, Asia Minor, and Armenia* (New York, NY: John A. Gray, 1862); S. C. Bartlett, *Historical Sketch of the Missions of the American Board in Turkey* (Boston, MA: ABCFM. 1876). See also Clifton Jackson Phillips, *Protestant America and the Pagan World: The First Half Century of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1810-1859* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969) and Joseph L. Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East: Missionary Influence on American Policy, 1810-1927* (Minneapolis, MI: University of Minnesota Press, 1971). A stimulating critique of missionary theory and practice is in William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

6. Rufus Anderson, *Report to the Prudential Committee of a Visit to the Missions in the Levant* (Boston, MA: T. R. Marvin, 1844).

7. The important role assigned to education in the early period of the board is underscored in ABCFM, *24th Report of the Prudential Committee*, Philadelphia, September 18-20, 1833, especially pp. 136-138. On the missionary role in the development of modern Armenian, see especially Cyrus Hamlin, *My Life and Times* (Boston, MA: Pilgrim Press, 1893), p. 250.

8. Sermon by the Rev. Jonathan Allen, quoted in R. Pierce Beaver, *American Protestant Women in World Mission: History of the First Feminist Movement in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdman, 1980), p. 51.

9. Eli Smith, *Researches of the Rev. E. Smith and Rev. H. G. O. Dwight in Armenia*, Vol. 1 (Boston, MA: Crocker & Brewster, 1833), p. 66.

10. Kevork A. Sarafian, *History of Education in Armenia* (La Verne, CA: La Verne College, 1978), p. 193.

11. Margarette Woods Lawrence, *Light on the Dark River: or, Memorial of Mrs. Henrietta A. L. Hamlin, Missionary in Turkey* (Boston, MA: Tickner, Ree, and Fields, 1854), p. 134.

12. Quoted in Sarafian, *Education,* p. 173.

13. Beaver, *Protestant Women,* pp. 67-81.

14. *Missionary Herald,* Jan. 1895, p. 8.

15. ABCFM, *Annual Report for 1844.*

16. Letter written by Henrietta Hamlin and quoted in Lawrence, *Memorial,* p. 194.

17. Hawes, *Memoirs of Mrs. Van Lennep,* p. 108.

18. Martha Lovell's biography is in M. G. Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett and Mrs. Harriett Martha Hamlin, Late Missionaries of the ABCFM at Constantainople* (Boston, MA: American Tract Society, 1860).

19. Ibid., p. 53.

20. Ibid., pp. 55-60.

21. Ibid., pp. 91-92.

22. Ibid., pp. 96.

23. Ibid., pp. 99-100.

24. William Goodell, *The Old and the New; or the Changes of Thirty Years in the East* (New York, NY: M. W. Dodd, 1853), p. 90.

25. Ibid., p. 93.

26. For a general description of the events of this period, see Leon Arpee, *The Armenian Awakening* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1909).

27. Goodell, *Thirty Years,* p. 93; ABCFM, *Annual Report for 1846,* p. 102; Benjamin, *Missionary Sisters,* pp. 109, 122.

28. Benjamin, *Missionary Sisters,* p. 171.

29. Goodell, *Thirty Years,* p. 96.

30. Ibid., p. 125.

31. Ibid., p. 94.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid., p. 100.

34. Ibid., p. 105.

35. *Life and Light* (publication of Woman's Board of Missions), 1882, pp. 347-348.

36. Ibid.

37. Benjamin, *Missionary Sisters,* pp. 244-245.

38. Ibid., pp. 297-298.

39. Maria A. West, *The Romance of Missions, or, Inside Views of Life and Labor, in the Land of Ararat* (New York, NY: Anson D. F. Randolph, 1875).

40. Ibid., p. 138.

41. Ibid., p. 189.

42. Ibid., pp. 189-190.

43. Ibid., p. 192.

44. A brief discussion of the seminary movement in America is in Frank Andrews Stone, *Academies for Anatolia* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984) pp. 5-10. The flavor of Mary Lyon's educational philosophy is well captured in Louise Porter Thomas, *Seminary Militant: An Account of the Missionary Movement at Mt. Holyoke Seminary and College* (South Hadley, MA: Mt. Holyoke College, 1937).

45. *Historical Sketch of the Missions in Turkey* (1862) and *Historical Sketch of the Missions in Turkey* (1876).

46. ABCFM, *Annual Report for 1858* and *Annual Report for 1868.*

47. *ABCFM, Reports and Letters connected with special meetings of the Mahratta and Tamil Missions of the ABCFM in February, March, April, May, and June, 1855.*

Also reports of the Syrian Mission, and of a Conference at Constantinople. The controversy over education is described in Hutchison, *Errand,* especially in chapter 3, "Christ Not Culture."

48. Cyrus Hamlin, *Among the Turks* (New York, NY: Robert Carter, 1878), pp. 176-177, 286.

49. West, *Romance of Missions,* p. 258.

50. Ibid., p. 262.

51. Ibid., pp. 248-251; Anderson *Oriental Churches,* pp. 219-220.

52. *Life and Light,* 1878, p. 162.

53. Ibid., pp. 163-166.

54. "Girls' Schools in Turkey," a series printed in *Life and Light* in 1878: "Aintab Female Seminary," pp. 161-168; "Bitlis Boarding School," pp. 225-232; "Harpoot Female Seminary," pp. 289-295. On Marash, see Miss S. Pollock, "The New Girls' School at Marash," *Life and Light,* 1882, pp. 347-349.

55. Stone, *Academies,* pp. 81-82.

56. ABCFM, *Annual Report for 1863;* "Marsovan," *Life and Light,* 1878, pp. 65-70.

57. Mary Mills Patrick, *A Bosporus Adventure: Istanbul (Constantinople) Woman's College* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1934), pp. 28-38.

58. Stone, *Academies,* p. 144.